

THE FURNACE MAN

By Georgia Wood Pangborn

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LUCIUS W. HITCHCOCK



WHEN it dawned upon me that the only reason we were able to get the great Damers house at a low rental was because Mrs. Damers wanted us there as caretakers—that they had even made John agree to keep their servants—I felt very cross. I had meant to get on with one maid and a nurse, but when I saw the rugs and the waxed floors I understood why people have men-servants for in-door work, and I capitulated, gave up the idea of having a nurse, and tried to do everything for Tommy myself.

Mrs. Damers had told me with a gush that Horrocks was a jewel. Something in her manner suggested that I wasn't used to the grandeur of a butler. Well, I wasn't, I suppose. Then she mentioned in that "by-the-by" manner that some people keep for items that are unpleasant and important: "By the by, we're leaving our plate and some things—mostly my old evening gowns, some of them with good lace, don't you know? that one doesn't care to give away—in that little room upstairs. We thought so long as you were to be here it would be unnecessary to send them to the safe deposit. . . . Oh, and we've stored a lot of things in the garage too," said she. "I understood you did not keep a car and so wouldn't need the space." She dimpled off sweetly and was honking away in her auto before I could get my breath. And that was the last I saw of her.

But about a week before Christmas a taxicab drove up and out came a stunning girl, carrying a suit-case, and Horrocks was announcing "Miss Damers."

"Are you really as good as Sally Rand wrote me you were?" she calmly inquired as she came in. "I meant to write you about it—but if you don't want me I can go back where I came from."

The Rands were our next-door neigh-

bors—very pleasant people. When Mrs. Rand called, though their place was much finer than the Damers', there was never anything in *her* manner to suggest that she regarded me as a kind of superior servant. Mr. Rand I did not like so well at first. He looked as if he had the cock-tail habit and was rather flabby. But it doesn't do to judge people off-hand. I've found that out.

Sophie Damers took off her hat; her lovely furs had fallen on the rug, and Horrocks was already taking her suit-case upstairs, so that when she asked if she might stay I hardly saw any choice left me. I tried to look hospitable without saying anything, but of course she could see my dismay.

She took a half-empty box of Huyler's out of her muff and tossed it to me. "Why, bless your heart," said she, "I'm going to share the expenses and help take care of the baby. I'm just back from studying art in Paris. This used to be my house. In fact, it is still, but I gave my brother a lease of it for a wedding present when he married. When I found that they were renting it—I wrote to Sally Rand, and she said you were a brick, so I came on. Is the baby asleep? I want to paint him, you know"—and she went up to her room.

"Well," I thought, "if she'll help pay these outrageous wages—"

That afternoon the first mysterious thing happened. There was a store-room in the cellar, and Sophie went down there on a hunt for tools to do some carpentering in her room. She came back without the tools and holding a great sheaf of papers in her hands.

"Do you draw?" she asked in an excited way. I answered, "Not a bit." She sat down on the window-seat and spread out the papers on the floor. They were charcoal drawings on wrapping-paper: branches of trees, stumps, one or two figures

"No; that would take a man," she said. "I found them in the waste-basket. Aren't they glorious! German—must be," and she bent closer and pointed to something written in German script:

"Doch bedroht ihr mir Leben und Leib:
fasste er nicht
Eines Finger's Werth—"

"Hasn't any relation to the drawing! He must have been just thinking it and wrote it down, the way one does. . . . 'If nothing but life's in danger, I sha'n't lift a finger to save it,'" she paraphrased.

"I've got to find out about this." She rang for Horrocks.

"Work of yours?" she asked, pointing to the drawings. He looked as shocked as if she had accused him of stealing the silver.

"It must be Cellar Carl's," he said. "E came since you went, Miss Sophie. 'E does all the cellars on the 'ill now. Something of an oddity, 'e is, 'm—always chalking up things like that. My missus 'as one 'e did of the cellar cat while 'e was waitin' for the fire to come hup."

"Bring it, will you?" said she, never taking her eyes from the spread-out sketches on the floor. And while he was gone she kept humming:

"Siegfried—Siegfried—Siegfried
Schlimm wissen wir von dir—"

Horrocks came back with a life-size sketch of a glaring cat sitting on a beam, peering out; its black fur all mixed with the shadow, yet distinct—the sort of thing that makes you laugh just as you laugh at the cats themselves.

Sophie looked at it soberly for a long time, then merely said, "Thank you, Horrocks," and let him take it away. After a little she brought some fixative and blew it on all the sketches and laid them in a pile, and started to her room with them.

"If you happen to hear him shaking the furnace," she stopped to say to me over her shoulder, "let me know, will you?" And I promised, but he was always a stealthy and elusive sort of creature, and though the furnace was kept in order I didn't see him or hear him at work after that for days. Or, if I did hear the furnace being shaken, it was at times when Sophie was away. She finally said she

should spend the day in the cellar if there were no other method, and went down every day to look for more drawings, but there weren't any. And so matters stood at Christmas.

From the room where I slept with the baby one looked down a hill over some woods, and beyond that was the sea, with the sunrise sailing in. Tommy, with his bottle in his mouth, used to watch as the sun showed like the red sail of a ship, hull down, and say something which his daddy claimed was "By gum!"

There was a big empty house just over the way, in the direction of the sunrise; twice as big as our big one; yellow and cornery. I said empty, but there was a lonesome caretaker about it somewhere. He kept a lame dog. And now and then he built tiny fires that wavered a feather of smoke above the kitchen chimney; just enough to show that the house was alive, hibernating like a bear, and would roar and shine and laugh and twinkle again when summer came.

On Christmas morning Tommy asked for his bottle at five o'clock, and while I hurried to obey I heard the old caretaker shooting—cats, I supposed. I looked over toward the house. Sure enough, he was up, for there was a glow of light in the dining-room window, and presently I made out very dimly some one coming out of the house, carrying something—a big log of wood, I thought. I had seen the old man carrying dead wood for fires before—wood that he gathered from vacant lots about—but never such a big log as that seemed to be. I wondered why he was taking it out instead of in. Perhaps he had found it too big for his fireplace and was taking it out to chop up. He rolled it into the ditch and pitched some brush on top of it. I saw him go back to the house and put out the light; then I couldn't watch any more because the bottle was ready, but while I was busy with Tommy I heard a dog howling, and as soon as I could I looked out again, and there was that miserable cur tearing at the brush heap.

Tommy was pretty good until seven o'clock. Then he began to fret so that John and I took him down to his first tree. Horrocks swept aside the curtains for us with a bow and a "Merry Christ-

mas, sir an' m'm," and he waited with us to see what Tommy would say to the tree. Tommy said, "By gum!" Then he pointed to the balls and invented another whole word for the occasion. "Gag-gy!" said he, and we all shouted, Horrocks with the rest, but he turned apologetic at once.

"I once 'ad one of my own, sir," he said, and there was a tremble in his voice. It must have been a real and lasting emotion, for as he poured out the coffee a few moments later his hand shook.

Sophie usually had breakfast in bed about nine or ten o'clock, but she had meant to be down to see Tommy with his tree. However, she had not yet appeared, so we put Tommy into his playing-pen beside the table and let him have the new rubber animals to chew.

While we were at breakfast the bell rang, and rang again before Horrocks could get to the door, but he finished pouring John's coffee with dignified deliberation before he went. He came back with his eyes spread wide and his mouth rounded to a perfect circle, and spoke hurriedly in John's ear. John rushed out, and I heard excited voices in the hall just as Sophie came in, looking sleepy and asking: "What on earth's the row? I think you were mean not to wake me in time for Tommy and his tree."

I held up my hand for her to listen. Horrocks had gone back to listen too. She set down her cup without tasting it, as somebody said, "Cellar Carl." But at the same instant I heard him at the furnace. He was late. I had been thinking that the fire was getting low, or else the weather was colder. Horrocks must have called attention to the noise, for I heard a man say, "Why, then *that* job's as good as done," and a policeman followed Horrocks through the hall.

The faint noise of the furnace kept on while they were going down the cellar stairs, then stopped suddenly, and I heard something fall, like a shovelful of coal. And almost at once they were coming up the stairs again, and the officer and Horrocks passed through the hall with Cellar Carl between them.

Sophie got up, very white. She was wearing a trailing gray negligée and her hair was fastened carelessly, she had been in such a hurry to see Tommy and his tree,

but she always had an imposing and finished look whatever she wore.

"But," Carl was saying, "I do *not* understand. I have done noddings. I did not desert—"

"Who's talkin' of deserting?" said the Irishman. "What's the Dutch for murder, hey? *That's* what you're wanted for. Now, come along quiet, and don't disturb the ladies. Ought a taken you out the other way, I suppose. . . . Terrible sorry, miss"—this to Sophie, who stood in their way, looking very grand and stern. And Carl—he stood there before her, looking squarely in her face, very grand and stern too. It was as if—how can I describe it?—each was accusing the other of something. And on her part there seemed to be an enormous surprise, and on his—defiance, perhaps—yet not entirely that.

"What does this mean?" said she at last. She spoke to Carl, but it was the policeman who answered.

"Well, lady, if you find an old caretaker dead in the ditch, and brush piled on him, and the snow looking like he was dragged there, you don't think he done it himself, do you? And you look at the tracks, and you look in the house—and you find a room that's being occupied, but not by the caretaker, and you find clothes there you happen to know are this here Cellar Carl's; and so you go down and you see tracks going from that house to this house, and feel curious to know what Cellar Carl knows about it. *That's* all, ma'am. He'll have a chance to explain, ma'am."

"You had your studio there, then?" she said to Carl.

"Oh, ma'am, there sure do be paintin's over there," said the policeman with a grin, "an' I'm thinkin' they'll maybe save him for Matteawan instead of the chair." He tapped his forehead and shook his head.

"Officer," said Sophie, "there is some mistake here. This gentleman and I have met before. He is quite incapable of the crime you accuse him of."

"Gnädiges Fräulein—there iss some mistake. I haf not efer before seen this lady." He spoke entreatingly.

She looked at him rather haughtily in spite of her defence of him, and spoke in German, too rapidly for me to follow. He answered something in a low voice, at

which her face grew hot and red, and she went away. He clicked his heels together and bowed profoundly to her back, and then marched out beside the policeman like a soldier.

It was the first good look I had had at him. He was not especially handsome, but the expression—a kind of clear-eyed honesty and youngness. I thought of Siegfried: "If it is only life you threaten—" The absurdity of his arrest showed in every line of his face, and in the swing of his shoulders as he marched away, yet—as John came back and told me about the clothes, the tracks leading to our cellar door, and a revolver they had found in the coal-bin—I hardly knew.

I wondered if he had been a poor student in Paris when Sophie was there—had been in love with her, and was following her about. Did that account for his lurking in the cellars near her house? But that would not do, for he had been doing the cellars for two months before she came.

She came downstairs while John and I were staring from the window at the empty house, her golf cape over her shoulders.

"I'm going over there," said she, and was out of the house before any one could speak. John and I looked at each other; then he ran after her. It was an hour before they came back. Through the glass of the door I saw that she was as white as death, and John helped her up the steps as carefully as if she were sick or old. When she saw me she knelt down and put her head in my lap and cried and cried. . . .

"She *would* look at—oh, you know," said John. "I begged her not to, but—she thought she would know something about him, and she did—"

"It was old Joe," said she. "Old Joe that I've painted from so often over at the Art League."

John finished the report in a quiet, business-like way, while Sophie sobbed and threw in a comment now and then.

"We saw the pictures. I don't wonder the cop thought they were queer. Most of them are patches of color meant to look at a block away. He rubbed his nose against them, I suppose. And some nightmares. . . . One side of the room has several sheets of paper pinned up, and he's made a great cartoon in colored chalk on

it. Cheerful subject—'*Der Fluch*.' Got it printed up in German lettering at the top. Faces in it to make you dream nights." John shook his head thoughtfully and lit his cigar. "Well, I've got to get to the office, murder or no murder, even though it's Christmas Day—that Rushmore matter, you know—I'll be back as soon as I can." But he had gone only a few steps when he turned back. "I say, if that business does materialize to-day, I'll simply *have* to go to New Haven to-night. It's a question of several thousands, you know. You and Miss Sophie would feel that you had to sit up all night with revolvers, I suppose, since you don't seem to think they've locked up the right man. No more do I, for that matter."

"Nonsense," said I, though I felt my face get white. "There'll be Horrocks. Nobody would attack an occupied house."

"Well," he replied, "I hope I can be back," and then he ran for his train, which was already whistling at the next station.

Sophie brought out a lot of back files of old magazines and showed me illustrations with old Joe in them.

"He had the face of a Jefferson," said she. "In the rests he used to tell the quaintest stories. And he could pose his face in an expression that ordinarily would be as evanescent as a flash of light, and keep it so for an hour, and always get back to it."

She hid her face in her arms and shuddered, thinking, it was plain, of the last expression she had seen on that wonderful face. Pretty soon she went on: "You must see those drawings over there in the billiard-room. Oh, that cartoon! '*Der Fluch*.' He must have been going through hell when he did it. It's a lot of innocent, well-fed people dining—grossly, but daintily, too, you know—and what seems at first a tapestry behind them is really a lot of starving faces, gaping toward them and cursing—"

Horrocks came in with the letters.

"You're lucky, Horrocks," said she, "that *you* didn't happen to stand within Tim Murphy's reach when he found that body."

"Y—you were saying, miss?" His big, smiling pink face had gone pasty. She looked up abstractedly. "Saying—that

the police always take the person nearest them when anything happens?"

"You don't think, then, it was Cellar Carl?" he asked with evident surprise.

"More likely the cellar cat."

He stood for a moment staring at his tray, then shook his head, sighing. "Yes'm—no doubt you're right, m'm."

Her brilliant eyes followed him with odd concentration as the curtain swung to behind him. When we heard the soft thud of the butler's door, she breathed deeply and said: "My word! I wonder if he knows something about it! These people always have relations, you know. Why shouldn't he have a son or nephew in the burglar's trade? It's happened before."

"Why, think of it!" she went on with enthusiasm. "How simple that would make it all! Some young rascal black-mailing poor old respectable Horrocks—The pistol, you know—did you know they found it in our coal? It must have been thrown there early before Horrocks's relative could get away. Carl was late. You remember that? The pistol must have been there hours before he came in."

We heard the door of the butler's pantry swing open again and Horrocks's face, bland but pale and troubled, appeared between the dining-room curtains.

"Beg pardon, m'm, but could I 'ave the hevenin' hoff, m'm? A family matter 'as come hup." He sighed heavily.

"Have you trouble in which we could help you, Horrocks?" asked Sophie kindly.

He looked at her gratefully. "You're most kind, m'm; I'm afraid not, m'm. It's our son, m'm; and I've word he isn't well. 'E's to be took to 'orspital, in fact, m'm."

"Really! I'm terribly sorry. He caugo, I suppose, can't he?" She turned to me.

"John isn't coming back, you know," I said anxiously. "I told him I shouldn't be afraid with Horrocks here."

"Can't you make the hospital arrangements to-day and be back to-night?" she asked him.

Horrocks looked thoughtful. "'E's to be moved this hevenin'," said he. "But I might arrange to come back by the night boat."

"That will do nicely," said Sophie. "But when did your message come, Horrocks? There's been no telephone—"

"My son's friend brought the news," he said simply. "Would you wish to see him, m'm?"

"Why—yes, please. I should."

He seemed a little puzzled at her desire, but returned briskly to the kitchen, coming back almost at once.

"Very sorry, m'm; 'e's just gone. I'm afraid he'll get the car before I can catch him. Shall I try?"

"No," said Sophie musingly. "No, thank you, Horrocks. Very sorry for your trouble."

But when he had withdrawn she sped to the window from which the car tracks were visible. I heard a car go by without stopping. She came back, nodding her head solemnly. "I *thought* that messenger sounded rather imaginary," said she.

"What? Wasn't there anybody?"

"Not unless he was made of air."

After luncheon there came on a fine, driving snow; very cold. When John telephoned that he must, after all, go to New Haven, the wire was so confused with the storm that if I had not known his voice and what he was probably trying to say I could have made nothing of it. Sophie came down in her wraps.

"I'm going to see Carl now," she said, avoiding my eye. I saw that she had been crying.

I did not see her again until dinner-time. She came down in a trailing shimmery black gown, with a chain of sapphires set in gun-metal, so that the blue of the stones shone directly out of the black ground of the dress without the glitter of gold to distract one from it.

"My dear," I said, "are things like that—wise—in this troubled neighborhood?"

"I hadn't thought," she answered. "I put them on to cheer me up. There's something about sapphires so—clean. D'you know what I mean? I suppose they really have as much guilt and blood upon them as other precious stones, but they don't seem to keep the stain. They take the taste out of hateful things—as incense keeps down the garlic in a church. But if they make you uneasy I'll have them sent to the safe deposit to-morrow. Would you rather that wretched plate should go too? I see no reason why you should be bur-

dened with it. It's a rather grand affair, but would be hardly worth while merely as material for the melting-pot."

"Oh," I said, "I do wish it weren't here, I admit."

"It goes to-morrow, then," said Sophie. "And these with it. I've quite a lot of other things up in my room, too, that I'll put in. One or two unset stones that I'd no business to buy at all—a jade bracelet I'll show you after dinner, though jade really ought to have daylight."

"You may go as soon as you bring the coffee, Horrocks. Or take it into the sitting-room and put it on the tabouret by the fire," she said.

I had been in the habit of taking my demi-tasse to my room and warming it when I warmed Tommy's bottle. Jane made it very well, and it was a godsend on those long winter mornings when Tommy's day began at four or five o'clock. I always went to bed early and never took coffee at dinner, for upon my early sleep depended my ability to take care of Tommy properly. To-night, however, I was in two minds, for I felt that I wanted to stay awake all night to be ready for burglars, as I knew I should if I took the coffee then. Sophie tasted hers with a grimace.

"Jane's falling off," she said, "or the grocer is. We must get some green and have it browned here. Well . . . I saw him."

It was the first time she had mentioned her afternoon visit to the jail. I had not liked to ask. She had made no further comment upon her amazing statement that she had known him abroad; I knew that there was strangeness—romance, if you like—in the air, and a melancholy for which that grim circumstance next door was not wholly responsible.

"We talked—art, mostly," she said, staring at the fire, "and of poor old Joe. Joe was German, too, he says, and had once wanted to be an artist himself; but he had a brute of a father, and so couldn't. . . . Carl has a brute of a father, too—the kind of man who understands no glory or honor outside the army. Oh—a great man, if you will—Carl adores him—as one does a mountain peak or a storm at sea. . . . But when it came to being a soldier—he decided that his life was his own

after all and he wanted to use it himself. I—I didn't understand him, once. I believe I thought he was not—brave. Well, somehow he studied until he could do very well indeed. But of course his father would not help him.

"He saw some American magazines and knew how much better his work was than the rank and file here, and so came over—steerage. I believe he thought he would fill his pockets the first time he entered a publishing house. When old Joe found him, he had been spending a cold autumn night on a park bench with his portfolio beside him. Joe explained the state of the American art market to him, fed him, and took him home, and fixed up the billiard-room over there for a studio, got him this furnace work, and posed for him. Can you imagine how he feels about the murder? He—he cried. He's wild to get out—not for his own sake, but to find the man who killed old Joe. If he could find him, he'd try to kill him with his bare hands, I think. . . .

"But, imagine! He swears that he isn't sorry for all he has been through—the nights on the park bench, and all that. How else, he says, could he have understood the things that made him able to draw '*Der Fluch*'?" She shuddered, with a half glance behind her.

"I am greedy of all life—all," he said. "I am glad that I have suffered as other men have suffered. If I must suffer, even to this end, I am not sorry!" he said. "So long as there is injustice in the world, why should I be exempt from it?" I suppose he must be a little crazy to talk like that," said Sophie thoughtfully, "yet I seem to understand. . . . Shall I ever again sit at my ease, eat good things, and dressed"—she gestured downward at her perfect gown and looped the sapphires over the tip of her finger with distaste—"without feeling that the wall behind me is tapestried with cursing, starved faces?"

She drank her coffee hastily and leaned back in her chair, her face pale and mournful in the shadows.

"It's a difficult world," she said plaintively. "How can you justify yourself for bringing that innocent baby into it? Has any woman the right, knowing what evil there is—everywhere? . . .

"But no. One fights and plays the game. It's life that matters, not the manner of one's death. Old Joe's life was fine. So is Carl's, and so Tommy's will be. . . .

"Jove! I'm sleepy after all." She stood up, yawning. "I got up so early to see Tommy's tree. I'll say good-night—but call me if you need anything," and she went upstairs. "Call me," she said, laughing sleepily over her shoulder, "if the burglars come."

I was dismayed at Sophie's defection. In her company I could have been brave enough, but I am not courageous by nature, and with Sophie asleep the house filled with sinister silences. I felt the weakness of the window-frames and locks as though it were a weakness in my own bones, and danger blew in through the key-holes like a fog. A shivering wakefulness seized me that needed no coffee, so I put my cup aside as usual for morning. I tried to read for a while. But my choice of a book was not happy, for I took down "Treasure Island," and you remember, of course, the pirates' attack upon the lonely house, and all the terror of that night. At once I felt Old Pew and Long John Silver prowling about in the storm, and Black Dog peeped in at the window. The only real sound anywhere was the sniff of the cook as she creaked up the back stairs to bed. She had a habit of sniffing as though she had been crying. She *did* cry a good deal, but she sniffed so much you never knew, and she was such a sour old thing!

The storm grew worse. The bay would be terrible. I doubted whether the boats would run at all, and if they didn't Horrocks wouldn't get back. Still, I thought, burglars don't like to be out in storms any better than other people—or, *do* they? I wished I knew.

I ended by working myself into such a pitch of terror that every creak and bang of a shutter became the arrival of a Thing to destroy us. I went all through the house, trying over the fastenings, but Horrocks had faithfully seen to them all. The thoughtful fellow had even nailed up a window where the fastening was broken. My heart warmed to him as I discovered this, and I told myself he would surely be as good as his word; that if a boat came he would come.

I took my coffee upstairs with me and firmly went to bed. It was only nine o'clock, yet the house felt like midnight. Tommy was restless. He kept biting his fingers with his poor little sore gums, and whimpering like a cold puppy, so I slept only in snatches. It must have been one o'clock when I finally took him into bed with me. Then, perhaps because cuddling him made me feel that I had the only thing of real value in a perfectly safe place, I went to sleep, and Tommy, with some idea that he had got to a place where his tooth couldn't bite him, went off soundly too.

I was awakened by a banging somewhere and sleepily went over all the shutters in imagination. They were very secure, I knew, but that gale could have unroofed a house. I decided that it would have to bang and blow off if it wanted to. I couldn't shut it against that wind, even if I found it, and I should wake Tommy if I stirred. It was up to Sophie, I decided, for of course one couldn't expect the cook to stir, even if she woke. They don't, you know. And I tried to sleep again, but the sound kept up, and I kept listening and growing wider awake.

For it didn't sound like a shutter. It was like—like a horse kicking in his stall—dull, you know, yet sharp. I crept out of bed so softly that Tommy didn't know it, and went to the window. It *was* a horse!

He was out by the garage, hitched to a truck, and he had stepped up on the wooden incline, as horses will step up on things when they're left alone, and was pounding his hoof on the wood. The garage door was open, and a light, low down as if from a lantern on the floor, made him a silhouette. But while I was still wondering what possible reason there could be for his being there, I heard footsteps in the room above me.

And that was the locked room where the Damers plate was! I didn't care very much about the plate, but I thought of Sophie and her sapphires. The rest would be nothing in comparison to them.

I must get to her room and warn her.

Sophie's door was open and the light was turned on full. She was lying on the bed dressed, just as she had been at dinner. Evidently she had been too sleepy to do more than throw herself on the bed.

No—not exactly as she had been at dinner—the lovely chain was gone! There were no rings on her fingers!

They were not on her dressing-table. For the moment unspeakable horrors went through my brain. I thought she was dead as she lay there—then I saw that she breathed, heavily, and her attitude was as graceful and relaxed as a child's, her face perfectly peaceful. I shook her, but she was limp and heavy. I wondered if she could be in the habit of taking some sort of sleeping-medicine. I had not known of it. But it did not seem natural sleep.

Before I could think further, Tommy gave a baby snarl. He was going to begin asking for his bottle, and he was going to keep on asking. I remembered that the lump of sugar was still in my coffee-saucer and fled back to our room and dumped him into his crib with the sugar, and he took it with a chuckle and set to work.

John had a revolver somewhere, but I couldn't stop to look for that. I took the big hat pin from my hat. Thank Heaven, a hat-pin in these days is as good as a dagger—or better.

Then I locked Tommy's door and took the key, and went down to the telephone. There was a chance, I hoped, that with the door shut and the noise of the storm the burglar would not hear the 'phone. They had the old-fashioned system; you had to ring up. So if he did hear it ring, how was he to be sure it was not from some other house along the party wire? I did not dare to turn on the light. It might have been seen by a confederate outside, so I groped for the receiver in the dark. Then I thought of ringing up Central by using all the different calls on our wire—there would be a chance at least of attracting the attention of some of the men in the cottages, and so I started in, but I thought I should never get an answer. Central is generally asleep at two o'clock in the morning. And, in fact, it wasn't Central that answered, but Mr. Rand. I knew by the voice—sharp and sleepy. But he woke up when I told him.

"Be there in five minutes!" said he when I had gasped out my story. Oh—what a glorious thing a man is! Even one you don't like, when burglars are around.

"You scuttle back to bed as fast as you can," he said. "Lock yourself in. Unlock

the side door if you can safely—if not, don't worry. We'll get in. Don't worry."

As I went up the dark stairs I saw that the third floor hall was alight, and knew that the door of the little locked room was open. The noises had stopped. That frightened me. Was the burglar out of the room then, and moving around? Could he have gone back to Sophie's room for something he had overlooked when he took the sapphires? I stepped into the shadow of the big hall clock on the landing and held my breath.

I could see Tommy's door from where I stood. He would soon begin to cry for his bottle, for that lump of sugar could hardly last much longer. But it seemed to me I was in a pretty good position now. If the burglar started to open Tommy's door I could rush him from behind, and if I was attacked myself I was in a corner and had a weapon as good as a stiletto. I took it out of my gown and studied how to hold it in the most effective way. It was an expensive one, with a good sharp tip that I always had a guard over when I wore it.

Tommy was quiet so long that I began to worry. In another second I must have gone to him and risked being seen, if he had not given a good howl. Then I knew he was all right.

The side door opened very softly, but Tommy was howling so now that I hoped his noise would cover the noise of the door, and Mr. Rand came up. He jumped, when I spoke to him out of the shadow, and pointed his revolver at my head. I drew him back with me and we could both see, at the top of the stair-well, the head and shoulders of a man silhouetted against the light. He seemed to be looking down as if he heard something besides Tommy's howls. We couldn't see plainly. It was just the shadowy roundness of a human head. We kept very quiet for a time—and so did he—but both of us might have talked in natural voices and nobody been the wiser, while Tommy was expressing his mind.

At last he went back into the little room and the light went out of the hall, so we knew he had closed the door. Mr. Rand said: "Now you go back to the telephone and get police head-quarters. No—get Dr. Reinhardt first for Miss Sophie—



Drawn by Lucius W. Hitchcock.

"Do you draw?" she asked in an excited way.—Page 483.

then police. The number is three two party R for the doctor—and police is just 'the police station'—remember, now, and don't be afraid to make a noise. Tommy and the storm will protect us."

Then he went softly leaping up the stairs—three steps to each flight—and I could see under his overcoat that he had only pajamas and bedroom slippers. That was the way he had come rushing to our help through zero snow and wind! And I had been calling him too careful of his comfort; had pitied Sally Rand for being married to a pussy-by-the-fire!

Tommy howled all the time I was at the 'phone, screaming in that dreadful way that makes you wonder what convulsions are like; yet I had to sit quietly and try to make myself understood over a wire made almost useless by the storm. Their voices were the merest blur and they all kept saying, "I can't hear you—can't hear you." So I had to repeat and repeat. And just as the doctor was getting an idea of what was wrong and was fairly sizzling because he couldn't make out our address, came a volley of shots and two men rushed downstairs as if they were falling.

Two great blasts of cold air struck me as first one and then the other went out, the side door opening for the first man, crashing to in the face of the second, and then flung open again by him. I afterward found one of Mr. Rand's worsted slippers on the top floor and another caught in the side door. Pussy-by-the-fire was running barefoot through the zero storm.

I went to Tommy first. A baby can be so awful! But when at last he was tucked up with his warm bottle, as good as a purring kitten, I felt that the worst was over and I could think about Sophie, and about Mr. Rand barefoot in the storm.

Sophie lay exactly as I had seen her first; one lovely bare arm trailing to the floor. And the room was like ice. I covered her up, got a hot-water bottle, and loosened her dress, but I could not shift her or make her sit up. And I was sure that she must be drugged, though how it could have happened, unless she was in the habit of taking something herself—but I could not believe that!

She was one of those big, heavy women, so well built that they give an effect of

slenderness, but she might have been cut out of solid marble when I tried to lift her shoulders on the pillow a bit. So I held salts to her nose and rubbed her arms. Then, remembering that coffee is given in cases of opium poisoning, I went down to the kitchen and made about two quarts, very strong. Remembering Mr. Rand's bare feet, I thought there would probably be a use for it before the night was over, whether the doctor wanted it for Sophie or not. While waiting I tried hard to give it to her myself, but I doubt if she swallowed any, and I was scolding away at her just as if she could hear, when the doctor spoke behind me and matters were taken out of my hands.

He was one of those quick young men just out of the hospital, looking about as old as a messenger-boy, but he gave orders and I obeyed him.

"I don't imagine it's serious. He wouldn't calmly kill a whole family, you know."

"Then, you think—but how could any one have given it to her?"

"Don't ask *me!*" he said. "That'll come later."

He was still working over Sophie when the police came rattling and banging in. Their noise woke Tommy, and he cried so I had to hold him in my arms while I answered their questions. Such silly questions! As near as I could make out they thought it must have been John returning in a state of intoxication, or else that I had been inventing the whole thing because I wanted the pleasure of seeing my name in the papers. I don't often get angry, but finally I said, trying to raise my voice above Tommy's:

"There is a wagon out there loaded with Mrs. Damers's things, and there are two perfectly good sets of tracks in the snow from that door to where the burglar is. One set is barefoot. The man that made them is Mr. William S. Rand, and if his manner when he left is any criterion of his character, I shouldn't want to be the one to keep him waiting in the snow after he's got his man."

Then I went into my room with Tommy and shut the door in their big, fat, red faces—and cried.

Tommy was just dropping off again, when back they all came like a circus pa-



Drawn by Lucius W. Hitchcock.

He stood there before her, looking squarely in her face.—Page 483.

rade, only this time Mr. Rand was with them, and a shivering, battered, handcuffed creature, with a bandage on its head.

I came out as quietly as I could, and warned them not to wake the baby again, for you can't put your mind on anything, even burglars, when a baby with a voice like Tommy's is expressing himself; and, as they had all heard him that night, they saw the point and talked in whispers.

Then the poor shivering thing looked up from under its bandage.

"Horrocks!" I said. "Why—it *can't* be——"

Mr. Rand gave him some of the coffee I had made. All the rest of them were drinking it too.

"Not *your* brow, my man," said Mr. Rand.

"Oh," said I, "Horrocks, did you drug the coffee? Oh—you might have killed her!" But I don't think he heard.

The bandage began to thaw where the blood had frozen, and a red stream trickled into his eyes. Mr. Rand wiped it away and got a kitchen towel to make him another bandage.

I noticed that Mr. Rand was wearing a very large pair of arctics, which he must have taken from one of the policemen. They drank all my coffee, but when they began on the sideboard, Horrocks looked up with something in his eye that in spite of his wretchedness was certainly the disapproval a high-class servant feels for people serving themselves. And then at last he spoke, in a hoarse, weak voice: "If you would like a little vermouth with your whiskey, sir, you will find the liqueurs in the left-hand compartment." And Mr. Rand, gravely opening it and taking forth the vermouth, mixed one for Horrocks.

"Isn't it bully?" said Mr. Rand, coming over to me, with his glass in his hand. "You know, I—well, I never did just this before. Really, you know, I didn't know I could."

The whiskey and vermouth were begin-

ning to tell a little when Sally Rand came in. She was quite cross about my getting Mr. Rand out on such a night; said that pneumonia was as bad as burglars any day, saw that he had hot water in his whiskey, and then went up to help the doctor with Sophie.

Then they brought in the poor old cook, and she went on her knees to Horrocks, and cried and cried.

"It was only that we was so desprct," said she, "at loosin' our little all that we'd laid by, and thought as how we was goin' to have a home to ourselves in our old age, and wait on ourselves instead of other people. And so we says—well, just take a bit here and there from them as 'll never miss it! And we thought old Joe was off in the city, for Christmas; we did indeed. Oh—he never meant to kill the old man," she cried, not knowing what she did, for not a



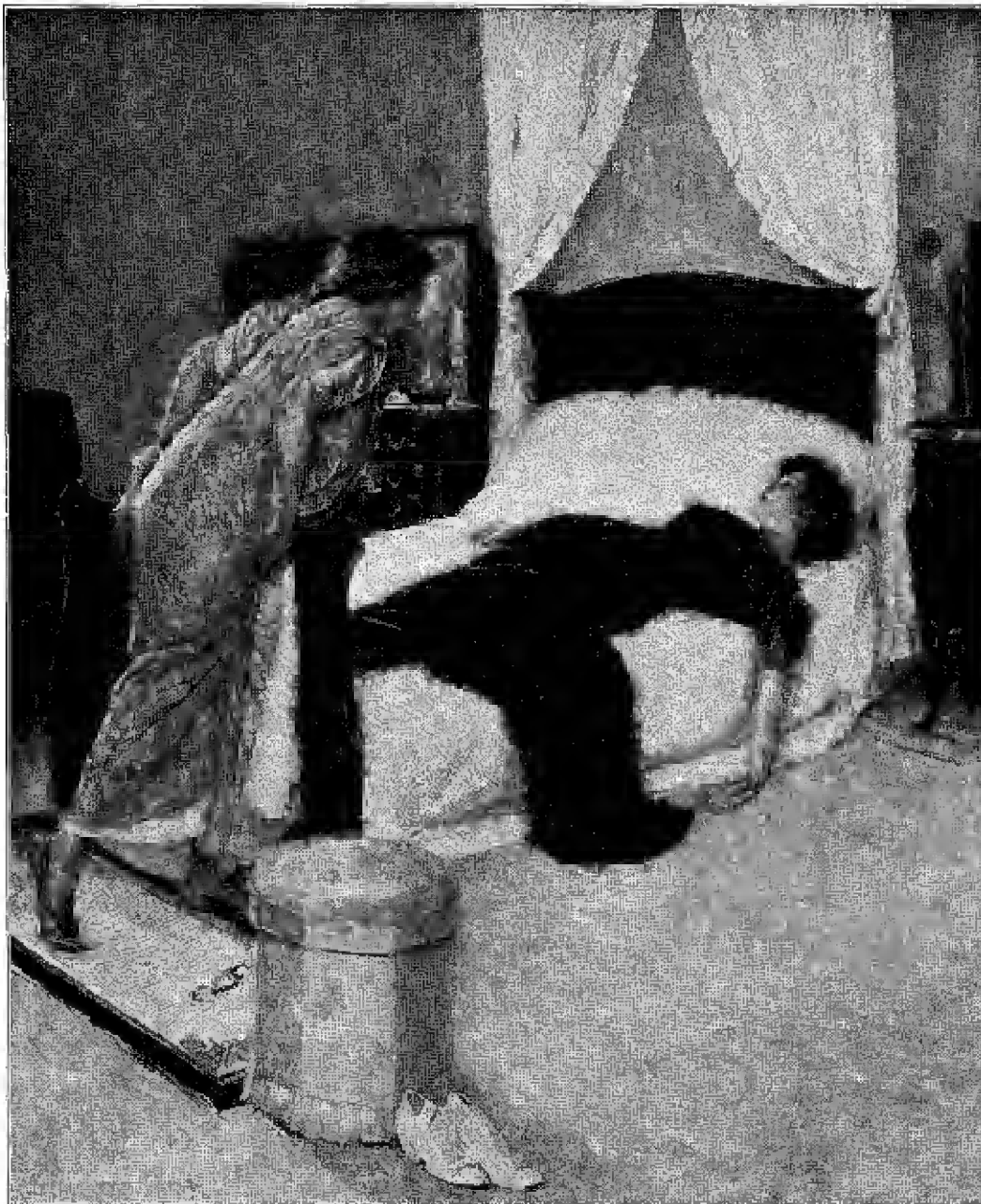
Tommy.

word had been said as yet to connect him with the murder.

Poor soul! Something we said or did made her see all of a sudden that she had been putting the rope around Horrocks's neck, and then she went wild. On her knees to all of us, trying to take back what she had said, inventing wild, impossible lies, each one contradicting the other. Oh—it was like the screaming of a hen that knows it's going to be killed! Until at last Horrocks, looking at her sharply, gave that "tchk" that a head-waiter uses to attract a waiter's attention—it's a terribly masterful sound, if you've ever noticed—and she shut up as tight as a sausage, rose, and stood primly, saying nothing more but "Yes, sir," "No, sir," "I can't say, sir," until at last the patrol wagon took them away, pitifully limp and collapsed.

I suppose my tears should have gone to old Joe, but I think it was for the cook that I was crying so bitterly.

The Rands went then, Mrs. Rand cross, yet proud, I could see, in spite of the fact that Mr. Rand had taken more whiskey for



For the moment unspeakable horrors went through my brain.—Page 490.

his chill than was absolutely necessary. He turned an affectionate smile upon me from the door-way, and waved his hand rather limply.

"Now, 'fever you have 'nother butler—'nother burglar—'nother buttleburgle—" he said, but Mrs. Rand propelled him out with a deftness that hinted at practice.

The young doctor came down looking tired, seemed disappointed to find the decanter empty, and gave me a few direc-

tions. She would be all right, he thought; would wake with a roaring headache, but no harm done. He would look in again in the morning.

"Here—you'd better take some bromide yourself," said he, stopping to put some tablets in a little collapsible box. But knowing Tommy's early hours, I shook my head sadly.

"Well, good-by," said he, yawning. "Such a delightful evening! Do you do

this sort of thing often here?" And then he took his impudence off.

I went up to Sophie then. She was breathing naturally enough. Tommy was safe in his crib, and good for a few hours anyway, after being awake so long, so I lay down beside Sophie, and the next thing I knew it was morning. There were no servants in the house—and the furnace fire was out!

I ran to make sure that Tommy hadn't kicked off the bed-clothes. Oh, I was so thankful to find him solidly asleep! And then I rushed down to the cellar, and I hadn't any time to shudder over possible burglars in dark corners. A fireless house in that weather and only I to take care of a sick girl and a little baby!

I never had built a furnace fire, and the thing had queer twists and crotchets that I didn't understand. It was an enormous beast too, and after I had the wood nicely burning and put on the coal—I don't know what ailed it, but it just snuffed out. I began to cry. I worked right ahead, of course, picking out all that coal, for it was stuck somehow so I couldn't dump it, and I started all over again, slopping tears on the wood.

After such a night to have to wrestle with this demon, while those two poor helpless things were freezing and starving two flights up—! Then I had the brilliant notion that at least we could move into the kitchen. I could build a range fire, anyhow. So I left the awful furnace, brute as it was, and ran up to the kitchen, cursing the wasted time and strength I had spent.

And I heard Tommy—oh, I heard him!—even while I was in the cellar! When I got upstairs there was Sophie with him, weak and staggering, with her hand to her head.

"Why is it so cold? Why is everything so queer? Didn't Horrocks get back?" she asked, sitting down on the edge of the bed. "I seem to be ill," she said in a puzzled way.

"Oh, Horrocks came back!" I said. "But he went away again, and Mrs. Horrocks with him. Now we'll go down to the kitchen until John comes home. Perhaps he knows how to run a furnace."

She had to lean on me going down, and I had Tommy on the other arm; but once there we were soon very cosy, and I made

coffee and toast and eggs, and Tommy took his bottle in Sophie's lap. She brightened a little after sipping the coffee, and I told her everything.

"Drugged, was I? Well!" and she drank several cups of coffee.

And then we all jumped and turned white. For we heard some one at the furnace! I stole over to the cellar door and softly shot the bolt.

"Why did you do that?" said Sophie indignantly. "If it's Carl—"

"It's some merciful angel, I don't doubt," I said, "but if you'd been through what I have, you'd feel like locking doors, I guess."

"I hope I'd know enough to wash the black off my face," she sniffed, and, putting Tommy in my arms, she took some hair-pins out of my hair to put up her own, and calmly sailed down the cellar stairs, looking like a poster or mural decoration—for she still wore that trailing black gown, and over it had thrown a Japanese wistaria kimono of wadded silk. Remembering the coaly mess I had left down there, I shuddered.

The furnace sounds stopped suddenly and I heard their voices—a kind of crying and laughing. I went to the head of the stairs to call them to come up, but they did not hear me, and I went half-way down—and then sneaked softly back, for there, under the light of the cellar lamp, Sophie in her trailing silks was weeping her heart out in the arms of Cellar Carl. They were talking in German, but I knew what "Liebchen" meant—and other things sounded the same.

After a long time the furnace sounds began again, more violently than I had ever heard them before, but it was not until the heat had really begun to come crackling and sizzling and swishing all through the house that Sophie and Carl came up.

"Mary," said she, pretending that she didn't look as if she had been crying, "allow me to present Herr Carl Hermann Von Greisenstein, whom I knew well in Paris. We—we are to be married—soon. But for a slight misunderstanding we should have been married abroad."

Cellar Carl looked at her oddly.

"And yet, Gnädiges Fräulein," said he with more formality than their cellar

manners seemed to warrant, "I do not see how being in prison on a charge of murder, and failing lamentably as an artist in burglars and the baby, and I don't know what happened until I woke to see John standing like an exclamation point in the



We kept very quiet for a time.—Page 490.

America, in any way proves me not to be a—fortune-hunter, was the word?"

But at her pleading look and the tears that began to gather again, he stretched his arms wide with a big hearty German "Ach!"

Well, it was pleasant after the horrors of the past twenty-four hours to top-off with a love scene. Sophie saw me yawn at last, and bundled me off to bed. I heard them laughing like children and Tommy crowing as I went to sleep.

I was terribly worn out, what with

door-way, saying: "What in the name of——"

I said: "Oh, just burglars. Tommy's all right."

"Burglars? Shucks! I mean what's downstairs!" He beckoned me silently and I looked over the baluster.

Tommy was on the floor playing with some of the choicest of Mrs. Damers's hateful mantel bric-à-brac, and Sophie was in a chair and the furnace man kneeling at her feet, looking up in her face, with his arms around her waist.